

International

BRIEFLY



Latif Yahia, who acted as Saddam Hussain's son Uday's double for four years before fleeing to London, according to a Sunday Times report, is seen on Wednesday. Yahia was forced to have plastic surgery in order to look like Hussain's son and is now hiding from the Iraqi secret service in London as a refugee. — AFP/UNB photo

ROK, Egypt to set up ties: South Korea and Egypt are expected to set up full diplomatic ties next month. South Korea's state radio said yesterday. Reuter reports from Seoul.

The Korea Broadcasting System (KBSI), quoting a senior Foreign Ministry official, said the two nations had agreed in principle to upgrade their consular-level ties to ambassador level.

No state funeral for Chen Yun: China said on Thursday it would not hold a state funeral for late leader statesman Chen Yun in accordance with the wishes of the country's most influential man after paramount leader Deng Xiaoping. Reuter reports from Beijing.

Chen died on Monday in Beijing at the age of 90. Regulations do not require a memorial ceremony for the leader who helped to guide China's economy for four decades after the 1949 communist takeover but who retired from his last office and an active political role in 1992.

Another cop killed in Karachi: A police inspector was fatally shot as he drove to work on Thursday, the ninth Karachi policeman killed this month in attacks blamed on anti-government militants. AP reports from Karachi.

The inspector, Hakim Khan Tanoli, was driving a pickup truck when he was attacked by gunmen on University Road, one of the city's main thoroughfares, police said.

Turkey won't yield to US pressure: Turkey apparently refused to yield to US pressure to set a pullout date for troops chasing rebel Kurds in northern Iraq and was dealt a political blow when Kurds set up a parliament — in exile in the Netherlands. Reuter reports from Ankara.

US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott visiting Turkey whose Western allies have demanded an end to the 24-day old incursion dodged the question when asked how long its leaders told him it would last.

7 IRA prisoners released: Ireland on Thursday released seven more Irish Republican Army prisoners early in recognition of the IRA's continuing ceasefire. AP reports from Dublin.

The latest release from Ireland's top-security Portlaoise Prison reduces the population of IRA members imprisoned in the Irish Republic to about 35.

China's first photographer dies: Lang Ching-Shan, China's first photographer who went on to earn international acclaim, died on Thursday at National Taiwan University's hospital aged 104. AFP reports from Taipei.

Born towards the end of the Ching Dynasty in China, he became a news photographer for the Shanghai Times daily in 1909 and his work attracted attention even as a teenage.

Blasts kill 3 Myanmar Soldiers: Three Myanmar soldiers were killed and several other people injured when a series of bombs exploded in the Myanmar border town of Tachilek. The Nation newspaper reported yesterday. Reuter reports from Bangkok.

Police in the northern Thai town of Mae Sai, across a small border river from Tachilek, confirmed the explosions early on Wednesday but declined further comment.

Turner's painting sold for \$125,100: A lost watercolour by British landscape painter J M W Turner that was discovered at a local auction in New Zealand sold for 78,500 pounds (\$125,100) on Wednesday, auctioneers Sotheby's said. Reuter reports from London.

London based German art specialist Hans Juergen Moschke bought the view of the German city of Cologne. It had been missing since the turn of the century until it was purchased in New Zealand for 600 pounds (\$956.20) last year.

Bulgaria, Armenia sign accord: The president of Bulgaria and Armenia signed the first friendly cooperation treaty between the two countries here on Wednesday at the conclusion of Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan's a three-day visit to the Balkan country. Xinhua reports from Sofia.

The two presidents also signed nine other documents relating to cooperation in such fields as finance, trade, transportation, agriculture, law and culture.

Tremor hits Colombian coast: A tremor registering 5.2 on the Richter scale shook Colombia's Pacific coast Wednesday but no damage was reported, the government's Geological Institute Ingeominas said. Reuter reports from Bogota.

The institute said the tremor occurred near the ocean floor about 118 miles (190 km) northwest of the town of Pasto.

Fire claims 6 in China: A blaze in a Chinese garment factory where employees lived, ate and worked, breaking fire safety rules, has killed six people and injured three, a Hong Kong newspaper said Thursday. AP reports from Hong Kong.

Fire officers rescued 10 workers, but found the bodies of two men and four women after extinguishing the blaze that broke out Wednesday morning in the factory in Guangdong Province, bordering Hong Kong. Wen Wei Po said.

Another blow to Bosnian peace
Serb army force major power envoys to cancel Sarajevo trip

SARAJEVO, Apr 13: Tensions rose in Bosnia today after the Bosnian Serb army forced major power envoys to cancel their peace mission to Sarajevo by failing to guarantee their safety, reports Reuter.

"It was not possible to obtain security guarantees from Bosnian Serb military liaison officers," the United Nations said on Wednesday. Sarajevo airport has been shut since Saturday when Serb gunners raked a US cargo plane with small arms fire.

The cancellation of the envoys' visit was a blow to the five-nation contact group's plans to persuade a reluctant Bosnian government to extend a battered four-month truce due to expire on May 1.

It was unclear when the envoys from Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States would make another attempt to travel to Sarajevo.

Their tour of Balkan capitals to try to restart the stalled peace process comes against a background of deteriorating security in Sarajevo and ceasefire breaches across Bosnia.

The Bosnian government launched a twin-pronged offensive in March that won strategic high ground in the north and centre of the country. The enraged Bosnian Serbs have responded by shelling civilians in UN-declared "safe areas."

Serbs fired heavy artillery shells into the eastern enclave of Gorazde on Tuesday and Wednesday.

A mortar bomb hit central Sarajevo on Wednesday, wounding seven people. Four civilians have been killed by shells this week and the United Nations asked NATO jets to mark targets for possible retaliatory air strikes.

The Bosnian Serb army sent a strongly worded protest on

Wednesday to UN military commander general Rupert Smith, denying that it had been shelling Sarajevo and warning him to stop threatening to use NATO air strikes.

General Ratko Mladic protested about a letter the British general had sent him on Monday, charging that the Bosnian Serbs shelled civilians in Sarajevo the day before.

"I resolutely reject such accusations as incorrect, tendentious, incompatible with our hitherto relations and extremely dangerous for mutual trust and the peace process on the whole," he said.

"I must warn you that the threat to use NATO air forces is an expression of your bias against the Serbs and may force us to re-examine our relationship with UNPROFOR (the UN Protection Force)."

Sarajevo was proclaimed a total exclusion zone for heavy weapons within a 20 km (12

miles) radius from the city centre in February 1994 and NATO was mandated to enforce the zone.

NATO jets struck Bosnian Serb positions around Gorazde in eastern Bosnia and Bihac in the west last year but the Serbs retaliated by taking peacekeepers hostage and grounding the UN military and humanitarian mission to a standstill.

Mladic's unusually tough message could herald a hard Serb line towards the United Nations as a countrywide truce, meant to last until May 1, steadily unravelled across Bosnia.

Western powers fear the pattern of small-scale offensives and harassment will escalate into all out war in Bosnia in the summer months. They want some progress in peace diplomacy to help push the Bosnian government to accept a truce extension.

20,000 Japanese police begin search for cult leaders

TOKYO, Apr 12: At least 20,000 police set up roadblocks throughout Japan Thursday, halting traffic to search for the missing leaders of the religious cult suspected in Tokyo's nerve gas attack, reports AP.

Officers checked identification cards of passengers and searched the trunks of many vehicles.

The coast guard, meanwhile, checked ships along Japan's western coast because of suspicions that the cult's top leader, Shoko Asahara, may have fled by boat.

But a spokesman for the sect, Aum Shinri Kyo, or Supreme Truth, said Asahara was still in Japan.

Police arrested one senior member, Kiyohide Nakada, on Thursday as he left from an in-

terview at a Tokyo TV studio. News reports identified him as a former gangster and a current leader of the cult's "commando corps," which recruits escaping members and pressures believers for contributions.

Virtually every day, police have hiked the dozens-day cult to yet another category of deadly weapon.

On Thursday, police said they have discovered that members of the group were retooling replica guns into functioning weapons.

Handguns are strictly banned in Japan, but model guns are legal.

Police said they found five replica guns in the process of being retooled in a search late Wednesday of the office of two cult followers.

Last week, police found dozens of gun parts in a car owned by the cult. Officials suspect the parts were made at a secret factory, and the Asahi newspaper reported Thursday that police had seized a computer programme used to make the parts on sophisticated, computer-controlled lathes.

News reports Thursday said a notebook seized from an arrested cult official contained plans for buying tanks and other military goods from Russia.

The notebook included prices: 200,000 drls to 300,000 drls for a used tank and 1 million drls for a new one and details on how to bring such equipment into Japan. Kyodo News Service quoted police as saying

China reacts to letter sent by US legislators

BEIJING, Apr 13: China reacted angrily today to a letter sent by 47 legislators to Premier Li Peng, demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the country's most celebrated dissident, Wei Jingsheng, reports AP.

"Some people in the US Congress always love to point their fingers at other countries domestic affairs," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

"This is really not a good habit," he added. The US letter, sent earlier this week, called for Wei to be released "immediately and without conditions."

Wei, 45, has been held incommunicado and without charge since he was picked up by police in April last year six months after being released from a 15-year prison sentence for counter-revolutionary activities.

CIA seeks \$19m to destabilise Iraq, Iran

WASHINGTON, Apr 13: The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has asked Congress for 19 million dollars next year to continue covert operations to destabilise Iraq and Iran, it was reported here yesterday, says Xinhua.

With 15 million dollars to be spent against Iraq and 4 million dollars against Iran, the operations are designed to support the Clinton administration's policy goal of dual containment," according to the New York Times.

The CIA began its covert programme against Iraq in 1991 after Iraq was defeated in the Persian Gulf War.

But the Clinton administration reduced the operation budget from 40 million dollars in 1992 to less than 20 million dollars a year after it concluded that the operation had failed to weaken the Iraqi leaders.

The CIA claimed modest success in Iraq last year, including the hiring of Iraqi agents inside the country, the shifting of its money to groups inside Iraq and a number of operations in the Kurdish-controlled north.

The 4 million dollars for Iran is to be used mainly to spread propaganda against its government, the newspaper said.

Tories head for disaster in Wales, England polls

Britain's ruling Conservatives are heading for disaster in local elections in England and Wales next month, a poll showed today, reports Reuter.

The Guardian-ICM adjusted poll for April shows the Tories falling back one point to trail Labour by 51 to 26, with the Liberal Democrats in third place on 18. The Guardian newspaper said.

The dismal predictions were more bad for the Conservatives and followed an embarrassing defeat for them in local elections last week in Scotland.

3 killed in Multan gunbattle

MULTAN, Apr 13: Three people were killed and some 10 wounded today in a gunbattle between tribesmen and residents of the city of Multan, in Pakistan's Punjab Province, police and witnesses said, reports Reuter.

Police said two people were killed when shooting first broke out during a dispute between local people and Kalpar tribesmen, who were relocated in Multan last year.

A third person died when demonstrators protesting against the earlier clash came under fire, witnesses said.



Denis Benohel, 37, who had his face blown off some five years ago when an aerosol can of insecticide made by the Reckitt and Coleman company exploded after he lit a cigarette, listening on Wednesday to the decision of a court regarding his care in Senlis, France. Lukas Beyerler, the head of Reckitt and Colman's French operations, was given a 12 month suspended jail sentence and was also ordered to pay million francs (about 400,000 dollars) compensation to the victim. — AFP/UNB photo

Clinton, Dole: A dependent rivalry

WASHINGTON, Apr 13: President Clinton and presidential candidate Bob Dole are fierce rivals separated by ideology, temperament and age. They also share a strange mutual dependency, reports AP.

Clinton needs Dole, leader of the Senate's Republican



President Clinton... majority to help strike legislative compromise over Republican bills that have passed the House of Representatives and now are under consideration in the Senate. Dole has staked out clear disagreements with Clinton on some defining issues — sup-

porting a balanced-budget amendment, backing a larger tax cut than Clinton has advocated, and proposing limits on US participation in UN peace-keeping activities and an intense assault on affirmative-action programmes to help women and ethnic and racial minorities.

Likewise, Clinton has spelled out where he would draw the line, threatening to veto a House-sponsored bill to cut welfare programmes, regulatory overhauls that would scale back environmental rules and cuts in education and certain other domestic programmes.

But in the vast middle area, they're going to have to find common ground.

Clinton may veto some Republican-backed measures. But killing bill after bill won't sit well with voters mindful of his 1992 presidential pledge to end legislative gridlock in Washington.

Gridlock could also hurt Dole and his ambition to win next year's Republican nomination for president. His leadership role gives him an advantage over the rest of the Republican presidential hopefuls, but leadership can be a li-

ability for a leader who can't deliver.

Dole lacks the loyalists in the Senate that Republican Newt Gingrich commands as Speaker of the House. With Senate rules giving significant power to the minority Democrats, Dole can deliver legislation only through compromise and that means cooperating with Clinton.

Clinton and Dole were largely overshadowed during Gingrich's 100-day march with the conservative legislative programme outlined in the "contract with America," the Republican campaign manifesto. Both are now trying to regain the spotlight.

Dole, who represents the farming state of Kansas, announced his candidacy for the presidential nomination this week. Clinton, in a series of assertive speeches, has spelled out where he plans to work with the Republican Congress and where he plans to wield his veto.

But after issuing belittling comments as other candidates entered the race, the White House was more deferential when Dole announced. "He remains the majority

leader of the Senate. And the president has said often he looks forward to working with Senator Dole in crafting an agenda that will meet the needs of the American people," said White House spokesman Mike McCurry.



Senator Bob Dole... that legislative leaders must compromise in order to succeed, and presidential candidates must appear uncompromising. For Dole, the more he negotiates with Clinton in the legislative arena, the more vulnerable he is to attacks from the Republican right wing.

India won't take part in NY confce on NPT

NEW DELHI, Apr 13: India, the only country besides the five nuclear powers to acknowledge testing an atomic device, will be conspicuously absent at next week's conference on renewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), reports AP.

India is not a signatory to the 25-year-old agreement and has resisted US and European pressure to adhere to a treaty it considers discriminatory and flawed.

Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee said over the weekend that New Delhi will not take part in the international conference in New York and has no plans to send an official observer to the April 17 to May 12 discussions.

He reiterated that India cannot support a treaty which discriminates between the "nuclear haves" — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — and other countries, the "have nots."

Accusing the treaty of failing to prevent the spread of nuclear arms and technology, he called for a "non-discriminatory and universally verifi-

able" non-proliferation regime such as that governing chemical weapons.

Jaajit Singh, director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, agreed that it would be pointless for India to attend the NPT conference.

"There is no point in India attending even as an observer because we have no role to play in extending the NPT," he said.

US-DPRK talks deadlocked
SEOUL, April 13: US-North Korea talks on nuclear proliferation have been deadlocked since they resumed in Berlin, amid Pyongyang's persistent rejection of South Korean reactors, diplomatic sources said here today, reports AP.

The United States urged North Korea to accept South Korea as the builder and supplier of the light-water reactors, pointing out that the South is the only country that has pledged to provide the bulk of the four-billion dollar cost.

Off the Record

'Down by the Lake with Liz and Phil'

CANBERRA: A sculpture of Britain's Queen Elizabeth naked except for a tiara was blasted by Australian monarchists on Thursday as an outrageous act designed to promote Prime Minister Paul Keating's Republican cause.

"It's an absolutely outrageous and disrespectful act," the Australians for Constitutional Monarchy (ACM) group national spokeswoman Kerry Jones told Reuters.

The rusting ferro-concrete sculpture of a flabbily naked queen and her pained, nude husband sitting together on a park bench by Canberra's lake Burely Griffin is part of an officially sanctioned exhibition.

The work is titled "Down by the lake with Liz and Phil." The queen sits with her legs clamped tightly together and her arms resting on her lap while her husband Prince Philip sits back casually with his legs wide open.

Queen Elizabeth is Australia's head of state. The sculpture was made for a month-long outdoor sculpture exhibition and approved by the National Capital Planning Authority (NCPA). The NCPA is a federal government body chaired by an avowed Republican.

Monarchists, who want the sculpture removed, accused the NCPA and the sculptor of pursuing Keating's Republican agenda to change the Constitution and dump the queen as head-of-state by the year 2001.

"This is a question of politics," said Alan Fitzgerald, the ACM's Canberra president.

Bionic ear for deaf babies

MELBOURNE: In what they say is a world first, scientists on Thursday launched a new bionic ear for deaf babies, reports AP.

Professor Graeme Clark, head of the development team that designed the ear, said that until now the hearing devices were too big to be used on children under age 2. His team has developed a bionic device half the size of the present one.

It can sit flat on the skull of a child six to eight months old.

The device, also known as a cochlear implant, uses surgically implanted electrodes, which transform sound vibrations into nerve impulses that are relayed to the brain.

The prototype micro-bionic ear has been successfully tried out on adults in Melbourne, and a worldwide trial will now get under way.

Clark said that within a few months the centre hoped to carry out the first implantations on infants.

The bionic ear is an Australian invention, with the first implant clinic in the world established in Melbourne in 1982. But Clark said until now babies had missed out on the technology.

He said research had shown that the performance of the bionic ear was better if a child received it at an early age.

"Ideally, we should operate on children as young as six months of age so that they can learn speech and language when their brains are at the crucial stage."

Woman in her 50s gives birth to test tube baby

LONDON: The oldest woman to have test tube fertility treatment in Britain has had a daughter at the age of 51, a hospital announced Thursday, reports AP.

Pauline Lyon gave birth by caesarean section Wednesday at Hinchinbrooke Hospital in the southern English town of Huntingdon.

A hospital spokesman said baby Lauren Jade, weighing 6 pounds, 5 ounces (2.84 kilograms), and her mother both were well.

Lyon, who wed her husband David five years ago, has a daughter from a previous marriage.

Russian troops shell last Chechen base

SLEPTSOVSK, Russia, Apr 13: Russia, shrugging off international criticism of its bloody offensive to quell the separatist southern region of Chechnya, turned its full military might on a small rebel bastion, reports Reuter.

Russian forces heavily shelled the area around Bamut, a town in southwestern Chechnya and the last rebel stronghold on the Chechen plains on Wednesday.

The wooded area around Bamut, which locals say contains a series of old concrete weapons silos from Soviet days, has come under fire since Russia sent troops into independence-seeking Chechnya in December.

Russian planes flew towards Bamut and artillery explosions could be heard from the area. It was not immediately clear if Russian forces were attacking the town itself or rebel positions outside it.

The military destruction in the rebel region has prompted protests in the West. Washington expressed new alarm over the campaign after high-level

talks in Moscow failed to allay US concerns about the war.

This conflict is having a corrosive effect on the development of Russian democratic institutions and Russian democracy, and it's having a negative effect on US-Russian relations," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

A senior US official described the campaign to eliminate Chechen separatist forces as a "major miscalculation."

Iran for 'Islamic unity' with Sudan
KHARTOUM, Apr 13: Iran called for "Islamic unity" with Sudan against the west as the two countries decided to establish a joint investment company on Wednesday, reports AP.

"We have to unite before our enemies. Islamic unity has to be created," Iran's Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri told the Sudanese National Assembly.